

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, March 21, 1909, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Houseboat, B. B. March 21, 1909. My sweet patient darling little wife:

You have been in my thoughts constantly and all the time and yet you have hardly heard from me at all. It is of no use my taking up time now with explanations and excuses and I will simply try to collect my thoughts and give you some intelligible account of all that has been going on here. At the present moment I hardly know whether I stand on my head or my feet — events have been happening with such startling rapidity. Babies, sheep, successful flights, aggravating break-downs, Aero Club difficulties, Douglas' break-down from freezing, newspaper inquiries, and the interest in Great Britain and Canada culminating in the invitation to address the Canadian Club in Ottawa and meet the Cabinet! Big things are looming in the future. The British Empire will look to Douglas and Casey for flying machines. I feel that I must drop the Cygnet II and all our experiments here for the present and go to their assistance. Such a chance may never come to them again — it only comes once in a life-time, and must be seized and developed at once — or lost. Therefore I have dropped everything here, have accepted the Ottawa invitation, and will be off tomorrow — returning in time to preside at the closing meeting of the A.E.A. March 31. A critical moment in the lives of these boys has come, their whole future may depend upon my going to Ottawa now or staying here to complete my experiments while the ice still lasts. My own preference is to remain, but I remember the Centennial Exhibition and what it meant to me to go or stay in Boston. You were the prime mover then and you are now. I imagine you beside me pleading that you love these boys — as I do too — and that it is my duty to do what I can to help them start on a great career. You and the Centennial have prevailed and I go. What to do exactly I do not know but will think the matter up in the train. This much is certain. The successful flights of Douglas at Baddeck

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have aroused a strong feeling of patriotic pride among Canadians. The Governor General has communicated with the British Government on the subject of the experiments — and the Canadian Government evidently desires to hold same private conference with me upon the subject. Their mode of getting me to Ottawa has been to have the Canadian Club of Ottawa invite me to make an address; and the Club, after conference with the members of the Cabinet, have fixed upon March 27th, as the most convenient day. I will be there on the 26th and will at once pay my respects to the Governor General Earl Grey, and to the Premier Sir Wilfred Laurin and the members of his Cabinet. What is behind all this is a matter for conjecture. My translation is this.

The British Government is becoming alarmed at the activity of foreign nations in developing the art of Aviation for war purposes, and at the non-success of efforts made under 3 British auspices. The man on whom they have relied is an American Cody, better known in this country as “Buffalo Bill,” a professional show-man, and not a man of much education. His flying-machine has so far proved a failure — and is bringing the British Government into contempt among foreign nations. British public opinion is much excited upon the subject, and the newspapers are urging the Government to worthier efforts. They seem to have been entering into negotiations with other Americans the Wright Brothers and the newspapers are asking — are there no British subjects at work upon Aviation to whom the Government could look in an emergency. Now just at this time comes the news of Douglas McCurdy's flights at Baddeck certified to by the Canadian Government. Then questions are asked in the Canadian Parliament and the answer shows that the Government is alive to the fact that two Canadian engineers, Douglas and Casey, are involved. Everything goes to prove to my mind that the British Government and the Canadian Government are both willing and anxious to give aid to Casey and Douglas. They are anxious to have them go into the work of manufacturing aerodromes for the British Government. Their mode of approaching me also shows that they do not wish this to be known to the world.

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This, according to my interpretation, is the position that confronts us.

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John McDermid says he must take this over to town now if it is to go tonight — so I will close now and write the rest tonight.

Want to hear about the baby — Is her name Barbara or was that only your way of announcing her sex.

Love to Daidums and David.

Your loving, Alec.